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ABSTRACT

This conceptual essay critiques current understandings of children's motivation for literacy learning, and argues for a reconceptualization of motivation that centers on the learner as agent in the social construction of meaning. The essay is illustrated with vignettes and examples drawn from two ethnographic studies conducted in whole-language classrooms. Both studies investigated children's perspectives of their own literacy learning processes and their constructs of themselves as readers and writers. The social constructivist view of intrinsic motivation offered in the essay is a holistic way of understanding cultural, interpersonal, and intrapersonal dynamics that support students' motivation for literacy learning in classrooms. Contains 53 references and a table listing elements supporting the social constructivist conceptualization of intrinsic motivation. (Author/RS)

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PERSPECTIVES IN READING RESEARCH NO. 6
Spring 1995

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Abstract. *This conceptual essay critiques current understandings of children's motivation for literacy learning, and argues for a reconceptualization of motivation that centers on the learner as agent in the social construction of meaning. The essay is illustrated with vignettes and examples drawn from two ethnographic studies conducted in whole-language classrooms. Both studies investigated children's perspectives of their own literacy learning processes and their constructs of themselves as readers and writers.*

In this essay, we propose a reconceptualization of motivation for literacy. We assert that intrinsic motivation for literacy learning is defined by and originates in the sociocognitive and affective processes that learners experience as they engage in the *social construction of meaning*. This is a learner-centered and epistemologically based concept of motivation that is linked explicitly to ways of knowing, understanding, and constructing meaning. This form of motivation is grounded in learners' cognitive and affective processes, and is inherently holistic and intrinsic.

We believe that literacy is a social accomplishment (Allen, Michalove, & Shockley, 1993; Bloome, 1986; Santa Barbara Discourse Group, 1992). Our understandings of literacy are informed by a social constructivist perspective. Our frame acknowledges the constant tension and confluence of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cultural aspects of the individual's learning and motivation. Language is at the heart of all of these processes. Students' perspectives as insiders in classroom culture are critical in providing clues to understanding these transactive motivational processes.

Our critique of current notions of motivation is prompted by several concerns. Many educators have somehow come to separate issues of motivation for literacy learning from the very processes and experiences of learning, that is, students' construction of meaning. This separation is evidenced by a common perception of many educators that motivation is something we "do" to children rather than something that comes out of their natural inclinations as curious, exploring, social, and

self-determining human beings. We suggest that the enduring remnants of behaviorism support practices that serve to manipulate rather than to empower students as learners. We believe that educators' dominant focus on students' motivation for competence and achievement has ironically been at the expense of students' intrinsic interest in literacy learning (Deci, 1971; Lepper & Greene, 1978; Marshall, 1992; McGraw, 1978). Additionally, the emphasis on achievement motivation promotes a view of learning as being primarily *instrumental*, that is, for purposes outside the intrinsic value of literate activity. We do not devalue competence and achievement. On the contrary, we argue that the goals of developing competent, achieving, lifelong learners will be best served by a view of motivation focused on students' social construction of meaning.

An understanding of motivation based on a social constructivist view of learning requires insights into the processes of classroom discourse, and calls for naturalistic and interpretive studies to complement the findings from experimental motivational research. Interpretive studies offer potential for holistic understandings of the complex interactive processes that take place in classrooms (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Santa Barbara Discourse Group, 1992). They also provide understandings of students' subjective experiences of classroom culture (Erickson & Schultz, 1992). The ideas proposed in this paper have evolved from our efforts to construct holistic understandings of classroom processes that support students' motivation for literacy learning.

We invite a dialogue within the educational community to reexamine what it means to be intrinsically motivated for literacy learning. We wish to explore possibilities for a construct that integrates an intrinsic view of motivation for literacy learning with the learning process itself. We hope that such a conceptualization might support the primacy of personally and socially meaningful and relevant learning in schools. These constructs do not constitute a comprehensive theory of motivation for literacy learning, but are evolving as grounded theory through interpretive analysis across our respective research projects that focus on students' literacy engagement.[1] This article does not attempt to report on our respective research projects, but draws from

[1]Two studies inform this conceptual essay. The first (Oldfather, 1991, 1993a) involved 31 fifth and sixth graders in a whole-language classroom in Southern California. The investigation engaged children as co-researchers in identifying students' perceptions of their reasons for being or not being involved in learning activities. A definition of motivation to learn was constructed a priori to focus the investigation. Data gathered over an 8-month period included fieldnotes from participant observation of classroom literacy activities and in-depth interviews with 14 students. The second study involved 12 first-grade focal learners in two whole-language classrooms (Dahl, 1992). These learners were part of a larger study conducted to determine how inner-city children interpreted their beginning reading and writing instruction in skills-based and whole-language curricula (Dahl & Freppon, in press). Data gathering in the first-grade portion of the study included fieldnotes, transcripts of learner talk during reading and writing periods, and written artifacts. Data analysis focused on patterns of learner action that indicated interest, ownership, and/or identification with reading and writing during the first-grade year. In both studies, patterns of learner motivation were analyzed through the constant comparative method (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

data in our research to clarify the origin and content of the proposed reconceptualization. In the text that follows we describe a construct of intrinsic motivation for literacy learning termed the *continuing impulse to learn*. This construct is grounded within the framework of social constructivism and is conceptualized across three nested domains that are articulated and illustrated through examples of students' actions and ideas. We begin by presenting the social constructivist frame for our construct.

A Social Constructivist Framework

If one seeks an understanding of intrinsic motivation for literacy learning that is rooted in the social processes in which literacy learning takes place, it is reasonable to frame the search for these understandings within a social constructivist view. Our views of learning are informed partially by constructivist psychological theories of Piaget (1973) and von Glaserfeld (1984) in which learning is seen as a process of active construction of meaning by learners. Our understandings are also derived from Vygotskian (1978) views that emphasize reciprocity between the individual and the social context, and the role of the more knowledgeable other in facilitating learning. Meanings are constructed and negotiated within the uniqueness of each classroom culture (Heath, 1983; Spindler, 1982). Thus, literacy is accomplished through the interactions that take place in classroom discourse (as well as in family and the larger culture) in which participants construct understandings about what constitutes literacy, what it means to be literate, norms and expectations for participation in classroom literacy activities, and the values inherent in literate activity (Green & Meyer, 1990). Participation in these interactions contributes to the individual's sense of self as a literate person—as a reader, writer, thinker, and knower. This frame of social constructivism lays the groundwork for the definition of intrinsic motivation that we offer.

The Continuing Impulse to Learn: A Definition of Motivation Linked to Social Meaning Construction

Oldfather (1992) proposed a redefinition of intrinsic motivation for literacy learning called the *continuing impulse to learn* (CIL). Linked explicitly to learners' social construction of meaning, CIL is defined as:

> An on-going engagement in learning that is propelled and focussed by thought and feeling emerging from the learners' processes of *constructing meaning*. CIL is characterized by intense involvement, curiosity, and a search for understanding as learners experience learning as a deeply personal and continuing agenda. (p. 8)

This is an inherently intrinsic view of motivation for literacy learning. This form of motivation originates in, and is defined by, the cognitive, affective, and social processes that learners experience as they engage in meaning construction. The continuing impulse to learn can be differentiated from previous definitions of motivation in three ways. First, CIL is linked explicitly to the learner's construction of meaning. Second, CIL is not defined in terms of actions or behaviors. CIL may *result* in actions on the part of learners that are

observable, but just as learning is not a phenomenon that is accessible to direct observation (Weade, 1992), we believe that the same is true for intrinsic motivation. In contrast, Maehr's (1976) construct of Continuing Motivation (CM), is defined in behaviorally observable terms: "the tendency to return to and continue working on tasks away from the instructional context in which they were originally confronted" (Maehr, 1976, p. 443). We believe that behavior is not a sure indicator of intrinsic motivation. For example, a student might return to work on a task in order to please a teacher, to score well on a test, or to avoid punishment, rather than in response to an impulse to learn grounded in processes of constructing meaning. It is our goal to move away from a work metaphor (represented by the language of "tasks") toward what Marshall (1990) called a *learning* metaphor, as we define this construct of intrinsic motivation. Third, although CIL may bring about enhanced achievement or performance, these elements are not inherent in the concept of CIL, nor are they the focus of the research associated with this quality of intrinsic motivation.

We are in search of ways to create classroom cultures in which students find their passions, discover what they care about, create their own learning agendas, and, most importantly, *connect who they are to what they do in school* (Oldfather, 1992). The continuing impulse to learn reflects these intense qualities of learner experience, and is not the equivalent of *interest*. The term, *interest*, does not necessarily connote profound links to a learner's affective processes, or sense of self. CIL does resemble, in many respects, Csikszentmihalyi's (1978) construct of *emergent motivation* in which one's motivation emerges directly from one's interaction with an activity. Similar to Csikszentmihalyi's construct of the *flow experience*, the continuing impulse to learn is autotelic; that is, learners' goals are embedded in experiential aspects of learning. However, CIL is differentiated from Csikszentmihalyi's constructs because of the specific links of CIL to learners' social construction of meaning.

Three Domains of Intrinsic Motivation for Literacy Learning

To further delineate this construct, we turn to an extended description of three co-occurring domains of intrinsic motivation for literacy learning. The continuing impulse to learn is realized across these domains of activity and relationship. The key elements of each domain are presented and defined. We include vignettes drawn from our classroom studies to illustrate basic ideas and ground our emerging conception. Although our description is offered in the linear form that text requires, we consider these three domains as nested entities existing in dynamic, interactive, and ecological relation to one another (Lyons, 1990). We see their boundaries as resembling semi-permeable membranes, rather than rigid divisions. Table 1 presents an overview of these relationships—but is not intended to represent a "model." Rather, it is presented simply as a delineation of the elements of the conceptualization.

The Domain of Classroom Culture

The most salient aspects of classroom culture for supporting student motivation relate

Table 1. Elements Supporting the Continuing Impulse to Learn: A Social Constructivist Conceptualization of Intrinsic Motivation for Literacy Learning

The continuing impulse to learn is realized through the transactive processes within these three nested domains:	
Domain: Classroom Culture	
Honored voice	Condition of deep responsiveness in the classroom environment to students' oral, written, and artistic self-expression.
Sharing the ownership of knowing	Within the classroom community, the authority of knowing is shared by teachers and students through discourse patterns in which they collaboratively construct meaning in responsive and respectful ways.
Generative literacy curriculum	The meaning-centered literacy curriculum engenders and supports a "rich broth of meaning."
Supportive social structures	The social contexts for learning shift as learners make various choices. Learners work in a variety of informal combinations that change from moment to moment.
Domain: Interpersonal	
Constructing meaning	Students engage with the literacy curriculum through processes of discovering and generating meaning and sharing that meaning with others.
Self-expression	Through literacy activities students declare who they are, what they know, and what they care about. Their personal responses and individual voices are integral to learning processes.
Learning from others	Learners exchange ideas and provide scaffolding for each other's work. The teacher functions as a learner in these exchanges, and provides scaffolding for further learning.
Domain: Intrapersonal	
Competence	Learners perceive a sense of competence as literate persons—as readers and writers who use tools of literacy for their learning goals.
Self-determination	Learners perceive that they participate in shaping their learning agenda, and that they have voice and choice about a variety of aspects of their learning within the given parameters of the curriculum.
Personal and social visibility	The literate community serves as a mirror that enhances the learner's sense of self as a valued participant in classroom discourse.
Epistemological empowerment	Learners experience a sense of intellectual agency and ability to know that emerge from a sense of integrity of the learner's own processes of constructing meaning.

to socially constructed beliefs about what constitutes learning. These include what it means to participate as teachers or learners, what roles and relationships are appropriate among classroom members, and whether learning is viewed as an interesting and worthwhile pursuit. In this section we describe ways these aspects work together and support learner motivation in reading/writing classrooms, and illustrate our notions with classroom examples. We begin with the concept of honored voice, a quality of classroom culture that springs from deep mutual respect and shapes teacher and student relations. As defined by Oldfather (1991, 1993a), *honored voice is a condition of deep responsiveness in the classroom environment to students' oral, written, and artistic self-expression. Through honored voice the community of learners invites, listens, responds to, and acts upon students' thoughts, feelings, interests, and needs.*

There are many understandings of voice. The notions of voice used within this framework are informed by feminist philosophy (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Lather, 1991) and critical theory (Apple, 1982; Friere, 1971). This is a notion of voice that suits our purposes in this context:

> Voice comes from a deeper place than our throats. Voice comes from our hearts, from our minds, and from inner places of knowing and feeling. If learners become connected to their literacy activities in ways that engage all of these aspects of themselves, they become motivated for literacy learning. Their literacy processes become part of who they are. (Oldfather, 1992, p. 9)

The condition of honored voice is evident in teachers' careful attention to students' questions, and in responses students make to each other as they consider their classmates' ideas. We illustrate this notion with a vignette from the Dahl study (1992). This study was a fine-grained examination to determine the range and nature of learner motivation in whole-language first-grade classrooms as documented in learner patterns of action that indicated interest, ownership, or identification with reading and writing.

In one first-grade classroom, traditional storybook reading sessions by the teacher became interactive occasions during which children eagerly offered their insights, associations, and criticisms as the story was being read. The teacher responded to children's spontaneous remarks and integrated them into the ongoing storybook lesson. The interactions that follow capture a representative moment in one lesson:

> The teacher was reading from a predictable book, Oh No! (Faulkner, 1991) and pointing to each word.

Teacher: There's a spot on my skirt. There's a spot on my pants, 'cause I fell in the dirt.

Chris: It looks like mud.

Teacher: Would it make sense if it says mud?

Isaac: It's a D . . . Dirt.

Terry: If you don't know what the words say, you can look at the pictures and see if the pictures tell.

Teacher: Look at the words and the pictures. That's good. Here's another one.

The lesson continued as an instructional conversation, with children's responses honored and woven into the story reading event. Learners' spontaneous talk about their insights and experiences in this and other classroom literacy events revealed their active participation in literacy activities and an equally prevalent sense of themselves as real readers and writers (Dahl, 1993).

A second aspect of the classroom culture supporting student motivation is bound up with the quality of honored voice, and involves issues of knowledge and authority. We label this element *sharing the ownership of knowing* (Oldfather & McLaughlin, 1993). It means that the authority for knowing is shared by students and teachers alike as they own and exchange ideas in the classroom. As the ownership of knowing is shared, the teacher invites and affirms diverse opinions, rather than positioning herself as the sole source of truth in the classroom. She facilitates understanding of the complexity of issues and acknowledges multiple viewpoints and constructions about specific issues. A vignette drawn from the Oldfather study with fifth- and sixth-grade students in the classroom of Sally Thomas[2] serves to elaborate. The Oldfather study (1992) was organized to identify students' perceptions of their reasons for being or not being involved in learning activities within a whole-language classroom. The students participated as co-researchers, playing active roles in identifying key issues about their motivation to learn (Oldfather, 1993b). Ongoing interviews with learners revealed the importance learners placed on expressing their viewpoint:

Lily: You can tell Mrs. Thomas what you think about things without getting interrupted, or somebody saying it's wrong, or something like that. You can just say what you think.

Lauren: Mrs. Thomas makes it fun for the kids. She lets us participate and she lets us tell the answers. She doesn't tell all the answers. She knows that she's not perfect.

Nicki: [Teachers at Willow] feel it's very important to know the opinions of other people and not try to teach them opinions to think of. *Because you can't teach an opinion*. It's important that you know how other kids feel and *their* opinions.

As learners understood the other side of debates in which they participated, they learned to weigh the ideas they were expressing. The teacher provided important guidance in helping learners value ideas from differing perspectives, including those of people beyond the classroom in different cultures. For example, the class had discussed how the point of view of Native Americans was often left out of the story about Columbus's "discovery" of

[2]The real names of Sally Thomas and the first names of her students are used here. The name of their school, "Willow," is fictitious.

America. Lauren, a fifth-grade learner, took the perspective of the Native Americans:

Lauren: They brought up America. They kind of made it civilized. The Indians started it all. . . . Christopher Columbus didn't discover America. There were millions of people there before him. If the Indians were there before anybody else, then what happened? A bush told them to go there?

Penny: Is it important for you to understand that?

Lauren: Yeah. So that you don't spread it around that Christopher Columbus did it, so [he] doesn't get all of the credit for something that he didn't do. And the Indians, the Native Americans—they don't get any credit for anything they did.

Penny: Why do you suppose that's true?

Lauren: I don't know. Maybe they didn't know how to write really good, so they didn't record it.

Another broad dimension of classroom culture impacting students' continuing impulse to learn was the ways in which participants' enacted the *generative literacy curriculum*. A generative literacy curriculum is one that supports what Sally Thomas, classroom teacher, called "a rich broth of meaning" (Oldfather, 1993a). In these classrooms, the focus of classroom literacy experiences is on the generation and sharing of meaning through oral and written language experiences. One fifth-grade learner explained:

> Students at Willow are different. Instead of not wanting to read, they'll read. Instead of not wanting to write, they'll write. They want to write. One of the things I love in school is that we're trying to learn—not just get the right answer. That's really good. You want to get the right answer, but you still learn. *You do better because learning is more important than getting the right answer.*

Learners read widely, exchange ideas in reading discussions, and write for audiences within and beyond the classroom. They are engaged in struggles with forms of literate action that have real purpose, and thus are involved in the reconciling of their ways of presenting meaning with conventional ways accepted by audiences outside their classrooms. During self-selected reading and writing activities, teachers call children's attention to the nature of the written language system and provide embedded instruction enabling them to proceed successfully (Dyson, 1991). Dimensions of choice in both reading material and writing topics, sustained engagement with oral and written language, and social exchange of personal responses serve as central features of a generative literacy curriculum. The *supportive social structures* of the class include student-centered group discussions and many opportunities for collaboration.

The child collective (Dyson, 1989) that forms through these social structures anchors students' sense of identification with literate activity and fosters a sense of belonging in groups of varying size and composition. Because learners can choose the social contexts within which they work, they shift from one

supportive arrangement to the next as needed (See West & Oldfather, 1993). This moment-to-moment flow of shifting social combinations is like the changing designs viewed through a kaleidoscope, where small turns of the viewing cylinder produce completely different patterns. As learners read alone, then move to a table to write alongside a friend, then confer with a small group or with the teacher, small changes occur within the patterns of literate activity that provide a context of support within the classroom environment.

The Interpersonal Domain

The interpersonal domain addresses the relationships among learners as they engage in literacy learning together. Three interlocking dynamics are reflected in learner patterns of activity. These include: *constructing meaning* as clusters of students engage with the literacy curriculum, *self-expression* as individuals discover and share personal interpretations, and *learning from and with others* as learners work collaboratively.

Duckworth (1987) describes the process of constructing meaning as "the having of wonderful ideas." In the process of sense-making, each learner goes through the process of invention. As Duckworth explained:

> The wonderful ideas . . . need not look wonderful to the outside world . . . The nature of creative intellectual acts remains the same, whether it is an infant who for the first time makes the connection between seeing things and then reaching for them, . . . or an astronomer who develops a new theory of the creation of the universe. (p. 14)

Duckworth observed that "wonderful ideas do not spring out of nothing. They build on a foundation of other ideas" (p. 6). The two conditions Duckworth identified for "the having of wonderful ideas" included the teacher's acceptance of students' ideas, and establishment of an environment in which wonderful ideas are suggested to students as they are engaged in their own intellectual pursuits. In constructing meaning, learners scaffold each other's ideas (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) and gravitate to the social support of effective peer interaction.

An incident within the first-grade study serves as an illustration of the scaffolding of ideas provided by peers (Dahl, 1992). The collaborative writing event involved a group of four first-grade boys drafting a story together during a writing workshop period. The topic for their story was an imagined trip to an amusement park (the Americana). Initially, each boy took his turn by writing a page while all of the group watched and kibitzed. At mid-point, when the story was established, the writers engaged in parallel production of pages, writing side by side at the table and showing their work to each other. The story is shown with page numbers to mark writing turns:

The Americana Book
By Willie, Tommie, Isaac, and Chris

One day it was nothing to do at home.	(1)
We decided to go to the Americana for fun.	(2)
But we didn't have no money.	(3)
This man gave us $40 apiece.	(4)
Then the man took us there.	(5)
[Drawing of a stretch limo]	
We saw about 89 kids and 89 mommas.	(6)

What I like was the merry-go-round because [blank space for readers'response] (7)
Then we went on the bumpercars. I like bumpercars because you can bump into anyone. (8)
I went to the Americana. I went on the tunnel. It was fun. (9)
We went into the tunnel of love. (10)
We got on the Ferris wheel and went down. (11)

In this collaborative event, learners pooled their knowledge about the world and about written language. The group established structures that sustained the construction of meaning across participants, even when the event shifted in its social arrangements. As the collaboration changed to parallel writing, each learner carried out the story line appropriately. Individual writing addressed each child's own particular idea or meaning, yet contributed to the storyline.

Just as learners enjoy the generation of ideas and the process of being heard, *self-expression* draws them to continuing engagement. During literacy activities in a generative curriculum, students declare who they are, what they know, and what they care about. Their learning processes are inherently connected to their identities, their values, and their meaning construction. In the Oldfather study (1992) students described the self-knowledge gained in writing a poem, the satisfaction of sharing their ideas about an exciting book, and the release that painting a picture provided when a student felt "all clammed up." One student explained:

> It's like everybody wants to express themselves to the world and everybody wishes the world could know them, and think they were a good writer, or a good singer, or good whatever. I guess inside everybody wants to talk and speak their mind as much as they can, 'cause they think it's going to go to the world or something.

The relationship between self-expression and literacy engagement is present as learners select books and writing topics, choose particular authors or favorite illustrators, and describe family members and family events in daily writing. These literate activities seem to serve as a mirror in which learners see themselves as literate persons through their reading and writing accomplishments. Thus, self-expression is a key feature of the social interactions that support learner motivation.

We illustrate the importance of self-expression with an example from the Oldfather study (1992). The class held "Big Discussions" that addressed important issues of the day. Although the teacher would facilitate the beginning of the discussion, students literally took charge without teacher mediation of turn-taking, as they engaged in posing questions, sharing ideas, and debating. In one of the study's interviews, a student described the teacher's role and his own experience as a participant:

> What she does is, she lets all of us talk. . . . Most teachers say, 'if you have any ideas raise your hand.' Mrs. Thomas will start us to say stuff. She'll give us examples or give us ideas and then we build off of those ideas and say our ideas, final ideas. I don't think this is really a *final* idea because every time you think about something, and then you think *that's*

> your thought but then there's something else about that. You can express yourself.

This explanation indicates that learners value the process of being listened to and are interested in the expanded meanings that result from class interactions.

Learning from and with others addresses the way that learners take in new information as they work together. It involves teaching and learning among peers, including quiet exchanges of information, pooling of ideas, and vicarious learning as children watch each other. For example, learners in first-grade classrooms established various teaching/learning relationships as they worked together. An apprentice pattern was evident as first graders worked alongside one another. Although it was sometimes unclear how these pairings began, their identifying feature was peer instruction; one learner closely observing and listening to another more proficient writer or reader. We present one instance of this pattern, then connect it with other teaching and learning events among peers:

> During a composing episode Willie assumed the role of an apprentice and closely watched Isaac as he wrote. Willie listened carefully and monitored every letter and word that was written, a process that was sustained for nearly thirty minutes. Isaac said each word as he wrote it and Willie closely watched the spellings, sometimes moving his own lips as words were written.

Learners in both studies frequently (but not always) chose to learn by working with others. Sometimes these collaborations were evident in quiet partnerships as learners worked together. For example, two first-grade girls wrote about a trip to the zoo by literally pushing their shared draft back and forth across the table. Their actions included making sense of their story, spelling words for each other, and working on letter formation as their composition developed. The two learners produced one draft from their pooled knowledge and effort.

The Intrapersonal Domain

The intrapersonal domain of motivation for literacy is nested within the other two domains, and represents the dynamic and ever-evolving processes that take place within the mind of an individual learner. The notion of the intrapersonal domain as nested within a social domain is informed by the work of Deci and Ryan (1991), who view the self as much more than cognitive mechanisms and structures:

> The self does not simply reflect social forces; rather, it represents an intrinsic growth process whose tendency is toward integration of one's own experience and actions with one's sense of relatedness to the selves of others. (p. 238)

Within the intrapersonal domain, lie the individual's constructions of self that come about through her interactions with others as she negotiates meanings with others, and constructs and reconstructs a sense of her place as a literacy learner in the classroom culture. Within this domain (and through

interaction with the other domains) she gains a sense of what she can do, who she is, and who she may become. Here, also, are located her emerging beliefs and values concerning the nature of literate activity, and her sense of what it means to "know." She begins to form notions about who can know, how one comes to know, and whether knowledge is transmitted or constructed.

These issues are reflected in such questions as "Am I a reader? Am I a writer? Do literate activities have personal relevance for my life? Are there important connections between who I am and what I do in school? Are others interested in my ideas and responses? Do I feel meaningfully connected to others as we collaborate in reading and writing?"

The intrapersonal constructions that are particularly salient for this discussion include the learner's sense of *competence* as a literate person (White, 1959), her sense of *self-determination* as a participating learner in classroom culture (Deci & Ryan, 1987), her sense of *personal and social visibility*, and her sense of *epistemological empowerment*. Although these constructions are interwoven, each has unique attributes that were made visible in the contexts of our studies.

The voice of Nicki, a sixth grader in the Oldfather study, cracked with apparent emotion as she described her feelings about being able to excel as a writer. Nicki experienced a sense of *self-competence as a literate person* as she participated in her classroom. During an interview, Nicki shared a powerful and dramatic story that she had written and entitled "Brush Fire." In describing her feelings about the story and her experiences as an author, Nicki explained, "Writing is part of me. I like it a lot. I like being really good at something." This same sense of self-competence was also embedded in the comments of Abigail, a fifth-grade learner, as she described her satisfactions about gaining knowledge in science. She was responding to a question about why she liked science so much:

> Because it's neat. *It's just kind of neat to know things that you never knew.* Like when I was little, I thought there was no bugs in the ground. It was just plain, and I could eat it or something—without getting any worms or anything. And then after science, we [learned] there were bugs and ants and gross things in the ground. And I started looking at the ground and seeing what things were and stuff. . . . And then I found out that some bugs have eight legs, and some have six, some have sixteen and stuff like that. I thought that everything had four legs, either four legs or two legs, when I was really little. Then I found out there was sixteen legs and stuff.

Students in both studies made clear that opportunities for autonomy or *self-determination* were critical aspects of their continuing impulse to learn. Paul was very explicit about valuing autonomy: "What's life without choices? There's not a life without choices. And even if you're younger you should still have choices." John, a fifth-grade learner, summed up his feelings on his desire for self-determination when he declared, "I *want* to *want* to do a science project. But I can't want to do a science project if they say you *have* to do a science project." John not only wanted to have

choices, he also valued autonomy in his work. This was clear, for example, when he was asked to describe his process in writing a letter to the editor of the *Los Angeles Times*:

> John: I didn't tell my mom about [the letter] 'cause I didn't want her to say, "Let me check it, let me check it." I wanted to do this on my own. So I wrote it and I think it'll get published really. . . . I wrote it with me, not my mom, not my dad, not my little dog. Me.
>
> Penny: Why is that important to you?
>
> John: I want to be myself. I want to imagine what I want. I want to like what I want. I want to enjoy what I want. I want to be me.

John's statement represents a child's search for identity. His words also reflect his impulses for self-expression, for self-competence, and for self-determination. "I want to be me!"

The intrapersonal constructions of their sense of *personal and social visibility* are clear as learners describe their experiences in these classrooms. These experiences of visibility involve feeling "real" to oneself, and feeling recognized by others. Participation with others in the literate community served as a mirror that enhanced students' sense of self, and the reciprocity of roles in contributing to meanings of the group. Nicki felt affirmed, for example, by her participation in the give and take of the "Big Discussions." Describing a classroom political debate, she reported:

> I know . . . me and about three other people were the only ones that were Republicans for Bush. And everybody else wanted Dukakis and it was really hard. . . . But that's neat to listen to the other side. And I know I convinced a lot of people about why I went for that, what I believed in and like that.

First graders could also "see themselves" as literate persons through their reading and writing accomplishments. Children were strongly invested in the books they had written and published. For example, when Ashley published her first book, a story about roses, her mother wrote a comment about it on the back cover where comments were invited. Ashley read her mother's praise and added her own written response: *I love my roses published book. I am proud av my self. Do dz my mom* [sic] (Dahl, Freppon, & McIntyre, 1993).

Finally, we offer the construct of *epistemological empowerment* as a key element of this social constructivist view of intrinsic motivation for literacy learning. Paul, a sixth-grade student, planted the seeds for the development of this construct, when he commented on what it meant to him to be able to express his ideas freely in his classroom:

> I think the only thing you can own is thoughts. Just thoughts. The way you say things. I think that's the only thing you can really own. And that's how you see the world, how you say the world is.

Oldfather (1992) defined epistemological empowerment as "a sense of intellectual agency and ability to know that emerges from a strong sense of the integrity of one's processes

of constructing meaning." We believe that one's sense of epistemological empowerment has the potential to promote a profoundly different quality of motivation for literacy learning than other forms of empowerment.

There is a critical distinction between a sense of epistemological empowerment and other forms of agency. A person may experience empowerment or personal agency in other realms of human action without feeling epistemologically empowered. For example, one might feel self-determining or capable, able to set goals, carry out plans or shape many aspects of her life, but lack a sense of the integrity of her own mind in constructing knowledge. That person still experiences her knowledge as "received" rather than constructed.

One who is epistemologically empowered believes that he or she is able to synthesize ideas, to make judgments, and to develop opinions that deserve to be heard. One who is epistemologically empowered (a) experiences learning as a process of construction, rather than transmission; (b) does not view external authorities, such as a teacher, a book, or a set of data collected by someone else, as the only sources of knowledge or wisdom; (c) feels compelled to make sense of things; (d) respects the processes of the construction of meaning in others; (e) understands that there are multiple viewpoints on various issues; (f) strives to construct and apply appropriate criteria for making critical judgments about ideas and understandings.[3]

[3]Examples of criteria might include coherence, resonance, elegance, simplicity, ethical or moral attributes, or others that are salient for the particular judgments being made.

One who is *not* epistemologically empowered (a) believes that the ability to know lies beyond the realm of his or her mind and looks to external knowledge sources; (b) thinks of knowledge in terms of facts that have independent existence outside the human mind; (c) views teaching and learning as transmission, or as described by Freire (1971, p. 63), as the "banking model" of education in which the teacher deposits bits of learning in minds of students who store it.

The concept of epistemological empowerment has resonance with the notion of emancipatory knowledge construction offered by O'Loughlin (1992). O'Loughlin has explored ways in which some forms of constructivism may serve as a pedagogical foundation for emancipatory forms of discourse in teacher education. These processes enable learners (both teachers and their students) to "construct knowledge for themselves, on their own terms, so that they can act to change their worlds." In spite of this attention to the relationship between epistemology and emancipatory purposes by O'Loughlin and others (e.g., Ellsworth, 1989; Fine, 1991; Giroux, 1988; Horton & Freire, 1991), these important connections have seldom reached across critical and feminist thought into the frameworks of motivational theories.

Some initial connections, however, lie in the research of Belenky et al. (1986). In examining women's epistemological perspectives, they found that epistemological issues appeared to be salient to women's attitudes toward learning:

> When truth is seen as a process of construction in which the knower

> participates, a passion for learning is unleashed. . . . We observed a passion for knowing the self in the subjectivists and an excitement over the power of reason among procedural knowers, but *we found that the opening of the mind and the heart to embrace the world was characteristic only of the women at the position of constructed knowledge*. [italics added] (pp. 140-141)

Within our framework, the women described by Belenky et al. (1986) who experienced learning as a constructive process were epistemologically empowered. Exploring parallel possibilities in school contexts offers clues for our understanding of motivation for literacy. Students whose constructivist teachers *share the ownership of knowing* may experience the same passion for learning described by Belenky and her colleagues.

In summary, we believe that the continuing impulse to learn is realized through the complex and holistic processes that learners experience in the three nested domains defined above. The importance of the *all-at-onceness* of the learner's cognitive and affective experiences within these nested domains cannot be over-emphasized. CIL permeates the culture of the responsive classrooms we have described in which students' voices are honored as learners engage in the collaborative construction of meaning. CIL is present among or between learners who share the joy of reading or writing together. CIL is also experienced in the mind and heart of an individual learner as she senses her own competence, self-determination, personal and social visibility, and epistemological empowerment as a literacy learner. We recognize that this is a potentially fragile experience, in the same way that self-esteem is fragile, and that it may ebb and flow for individual learners from moment to moment in daily life in classrooms.

A child who participates in a responsive environment that honors her voice and supports her continuing impulse to learn might conclude:

> In this classroom, I have wonderful ideas. My teacher and my friends want to hear what I have come up with. They think my ideas are remarkable. I think I'll have even more ideas coming up. When I work with my friends, and when I talk to my teacher, I learn from them, and they learn from me, too. I know I'm a reader and an author.

Limitations

The view presented here is centered on the realm of the classroom. We are acutely aware that there are elements salient to CIL that extend beyond the classroom—to the family, the school, the larger community and culture—that are not encompassed by the three domains presented. Additionally, we recognize that further articulation of the dynamics within and among the three domains remains to be done. This articulation might be aided in the future by combining the sociological perspective offered by symbolic interactionism with social constructivism as exemplified by the work of Pollard (1990) as he framed his study of the sociology of learning in British Primary School. We also suspect that potentially important insights might be gained through

applying a lens of resistance theory to these ideas, in order to understand structural reasons why some students may or may not easily experience classroom literacy learning as their own agenda (D'Amato, 1988; Kozol, 1991; Ogbu, 1991).

Directions For Future Research

This is the beginning of our efforts to build a grounded theory of intrinsic motivation for literacy learning based on social constructivism. Many questions emerge from this beginning:

1. Are epistemological empowerment and the continuing impulse to learn likely to be maintained by students who experience them as they move beyond the original contexts in which they are developed?

2. What content-specific qualities are part of epistemological empowerment? For example, what are the ways of knowing that are peculiar to the literate processes of scientists, historians, or mathematicians that would need to be brought into this frame? How do students perceive the process of gaining epistemological empowerment, or a sense of intellectual agency within these specific arenas?

3. What might be learned about differences of gender, age, class, race, and ethnicity in relation to experiencing epistemological empowerment and the continuing impulse to learn? Are there vulnerable periods during which students may be more at risk in relation to these concerns?

4. What experiences and/or propensities make it possible for teachers to establish classroom cultures that support epistemological empowerment? How might teacher education programs provide experiences that facilitate the transformations of teachers' thinking to enable them to honor students' voices and share the ownership of knowing?

5. What would discourse analysis of other classroom contexts reveal about the use of language and qualities of interaction among participants in classrooms that support students' continuing impulse to learn as they engage in literate activity.

In conclusion, we have proposed a social constructivist view of intrinsic motivation that offers a holistic way of understanding cultural, interpersonal, and intrapersonal dynamics that support students' motivation for literacy learning in classrooms. In this view, literacy learning and motivation are inextricably bound. No longer can we look at students' intrinsic motivation in terms of others' purposes. The purposes, experiences, and perceptions of learners within the classroom culture become the primary focus and provide the indicators that enable educators to understand conditions that support students' continuing impulse to learn.

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